



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – World Tuberculosis Day

**Remarks of Ambassador Jeff Bleich
Commemorating World TB Day
Parliament House, Canberra**

(Remarks as prepared for delivery – March 17, 2010)

I am very happy to be participating in this important event to mark World Tuberculosis Day here in Australia.

TB was once the leading cause of death in the United States. Today, thanks to vaccinations and other public health efforts there were fewer than 14,000 cases in the entire Country. But while the U.S. and Australia have had great success in combatting this debilitating disease at home, it remains a major threat in more than 40 countries globally, and kills more than 1.7 million people a year.

In Indonesia and the Philippines alone, there were nearly 900,000 new cases of TB detected in 2007. The emergence of multi-drug resistant TB is a particularly ominous development. Not only does it threaten to accelerate the epidemic rates in these neighboring countries, but it represents a real threat that TB could resurface even in developed countries with strong health systems.

The importance of cooperation and collaboration between governments, the health industry, and health NGOs has never been greater. We need new tools, new education, and new methodologies to combat TB.

The greatest enemy in our battle against TB today though is not the mutation of the virus, but our complacency about TB as a threat. The fact that the newest TB drug is 40 years old; the standard diagnostic technology used in developing countries is 100 years old; and the BCG vaccine was introduced in 1921 highlights the fact that we need to bring fresh eyes and a renewed commitment to battling this disease.

The commitment in the United States is clear and it comes with equal vigor from both sides of the political spectrum in Washington, D.C. Today's efforts began under the previous administration and they are fully supported by the Obama Administration and the Congress.

The U.S. has been a leading contributor to the Global Fund to Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis. In the past 10 years, working with the WHO and partners



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – World Tuberculosis Day

around the globe, the U.S. has provided more than \$777 million to combat TB worldwide. Those efforts have helped provide effective treatment for 10 million people with TB in 78 countries.

But today we are putting our foot on the accelerator in the drive to make a safer, healthier world. President Obama's Global Health Initiative commits unprecedented resources – \$63 billion over six years – and will more than double our previous funding levels between now and 2014. The GHI provides specific and targeted performance goals in many areas, one of the most important of which is controlling TB.

In the Pacific, our collaboration between the United States, great U.S. companies like Eli Lilly, and our neighbors in this region, has been especially close. In addition to coordinating our donations to international TB efforts, we have a special link between our Centers for Disease Control and the ARC, which work together in places like Guam, the Marshall Islands, and Samoa to provide training and education to health providers on how to manage TB effectively.

So today, as we confront the threat of TB, I want to thank Eli Lilly and the ARC for their efforts. Your work strengthens public awareness, provides real solutions, and saves lives. On behalf of the President, Secretary Clinton, and the United States of America, we look forward to working together with you to meet this challenge.